



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Whittington W. Clement
Secretary of Transportation

Office of the Governor
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Richmond, Virginia 23218

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October 10, 2003

Mr. Roger Diedrich, Chair
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Mid-Atlantic Office
200 North Glebe Road, Suite 905
Arlington, Virginia 22203

Dear Mr. Diedrich:

Thank you for your letter expressing your concerns regarding the ongoing Capital Beltway Study.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is currently developing the Final Environmental Impact Statement for this study and as part of that effort is evaluating high occupancy toll lanes as an operational element of the managed lanes contained in each of the Candidate Build Alternatives discussed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. These evaluations are occurring as a direct result of the extensive public comments on the draft document.

As you know, the 1977 Capital Beltway Major Investment Study recommended a multi-modal strategy with two separate components to be studied separately:

- Lane management strategies in the corridor that support high occupancy vehicles and bus transit use.
- Rail transit planning for connectivity of radial lines.

These studies have been conducted to ensure that highway improvement in the corridor do not preclude rail improvements and vice versa.

I encourage you to review the project's web site for updates in the near future. The web site is a critical part of our overall public information efforts for this study. The web site address is <http://project1.parsons.com/capitalbeltway/>.

Again, thank you for your interest in this important transportation study.

Sincerely,

Whittington W. Clement

WWC:es

Copy: Mr. Philip A. Shucet



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September 16, 2003

Whittington W. Clement
Secretary of Transportation
Ninth Street Office Building
202 North 9th Street, 5th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Secretary Clement:

The Sierra Club is very concerned about the recent decision by the Commonwealth Transportation Board to include the Flour Daniel HOT Lanes proposal as an alternative in the Capital Beltway Study. We believe that including the HOT lanes proposal without including a rail and land-use alternative undermines the public involvement process on an important transportation decision.

In the early stages of this project, VDOT independently considered a large number of improvement options. Many alternatives, including all rail options, were rejected for consideration in the DEIS. Nonetheless, hearings on the DEIS in 2002 brought out hundreds of citizens who objected to the options in the DEIS and requested that the rail option be studied. Their requests were anchored on the conclusions of the Capital Beltway Corridor Rail Feasibility Study by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, which found that a rail option was viable, even when only current land use plans and patterns are considered.

However, VDOT is not considering a rail option with alternate land use patterns. Instead, within the last three months, we have seen an unsolicited HOT Lanes proposal from Flour Daniel incorporated into the study. It is clear that this proposal is on the fast track, even though the proposal raises many questions regarding financial accountability, operational feasibility, and the viability of bus service on the express lanes. It would be a serious breach of the public trust for VDOT move forward with the HOT lanes proposal while ignoring the demands by citizens for a rail and land use option.

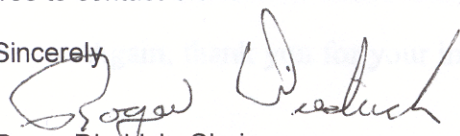
The Sierra Club requests that the DEIS be modified to include a fair and balanced presentation of all options for improving mobility, including a rail option with alternate land use patterns. We also request that the HOT lane option include impacts on intersecting arterial roads, provide information on potential express bus stations and access to these stations, and include long-term operating costs and financial commitments to fund the costs. Anything less will fall short of an objective comparison of alternatives.

Furthermore, we request a full public involvement process for the Beltway HOT Lanes proposal, including new public hearings and a 60-day public comment period.

We have many concerns about the Fluor Daniel HOT Lanes proposal, and we are enclosing a recent Op-Ed piece published in the Northern Virginia Journal explaining these concerns.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to hearing your response. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sierra Club Conservation Organizer Kim Novick at (703) 312-0533; knovicksc@earthlink.net.

Sincerely,


Roger Diedrich, Chair
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter

CC: Philip Shucet, VDOT Commissioner
Karen Rae, VDRPT Director

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